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RAT -VE IN ALL SYMPTOMATIC CASES NEED RT-PCR TEST: GOVT

Covid symptomatic persons must be administered RT-PCR tests if their Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) results are negative

WHAT ABOUT ASYMPTOMATIC CASES?

Apart from symptomatic persons, those who were asymptomatic at the time of the Rapid Antigen Test (RAT), but developed symptoms within the next two to three days, must also be administered the RT-PCR test. In a letter to the states, the Centre said, "This is to ensure that symptomatic negative cases don't remain untested and don't spread the disease" | P9

MECHANISM TO MONITOR RAT RESULTS

The Centre has also urged the states to set up a monitoring mechanism at the district and state levels to analyse RAT results. The directive comes amid concerns that the current spike in Covid-19 cases across India could be the result of over-reliance on RATs which misses positive cases about 50% of the time

95,735

FRESH COVID CASES IN INDIA BETWEEN WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY MORNING

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VILAYUWAKUDI • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOLKATA • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • DELHI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVMOGGA • MANGALURU • THIRUPATI • THIRUCHIRAPPALLI • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • CHHANNAPUR • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • JODHPUR • GUDGUD • NAGAPATTINAM • THIRISSUR • KALABURGI

SC'S WHIP

Centre sets up panel to assess waiving interest on interest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@New Delhi

HOURS after the Supreme Court gave the Centre two more weeks to frame its position on the loan moratorium, the Union Finance Ministry constituted an expert committee to make an overall assessment on waiver of interest on interest.

The committee will be chaired by former Comptroller and Auditor General of India Rajiv Mehrotra and will have Ravindra H Dholakia, former member of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, and B. S. Prasad, former managing director of SBI and IDBI Bank, as members.

The panel will submit its report in a week.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court extended its previous order on loan moratorium, saying accounts that have not been declared non-performing assets (NPAs) as on August 31 cannot be declared as such until further notice. The inter-

im order will continue until the next hearing on September 28.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan, while giving the Centre time to make a decision, said the court is inclined to pass an order against charging interest on interest as it viewed it as a penal interest.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sought time to file a comprehensive affidavit on the decisions taken so far. The bench accepted his plea and asked him to place all decisions taken by the RBI and the banks before it for further consideration.

"A decision must be taken after considering the interest of all classes of creditors and all the sectors of the economy," the court told Mehta.

Initially, the bench was keen to pass an interim order, but it refrained from doing so after the Centre and the banks' association requested the judges not to do so.

Jaishankar, Wang discuss LAC flare-up

India stresses need for peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control with China

PUSHKAR BANAKAR @New Delhi

AMID the ongoing face-off between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow and stressed the need for peace and tranquility on the border. The much awaited bilateral talks went on for close to three hours.

Sources said both sides put forward their respective stands on the prickly issue, with Jaishankar emphasising that Indian troops had never transgressed the LAC. An official statement on the outcome of the meeting is still awaited.

This was their first face-to-face meeting after the June 15 violent stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops. The two ministers had a telephonic conversation a day later.

Tensions escalated further on Monday with both sides accusing each other of opening gunfire on the southern bank of the Pangong Tso. India and China have an agreement in place since 1996, which prohibits the use of firearms within a 2-km radius of the LAC.

Earlier in the day, the foreign ministers of Russia, India and China (RIC) had a luncheon meeting, where, sources said, the LAC situation did not come up for discussion. However, a RIC joint statement said all topical regional and international issues were discussed.

"The Ministers exchanged views on further strengthening of Russia-India-China trilateral cooperation as well as topical issues of international and regional importance, in the spirit of mutual understanding, friendship and trust. The Ministers noted that common de-



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar (L) and his Russian and Chinese counterparts Sergey Lavrov and Wang Yi, ahead of the RIC meeting, in Moscow on Wednesday | P11

AGGRESSIVE LINE IN CHINESE GOVT MOUTHPIECE

"Facts have proven that Indian nationalist forces yield to coercion, but not to persuasion. They very much need another lesson in failure before believing that China's commitment to long-term border peace is not weakness," Chinese govt mouthpiece Global Times said in an editorial

velopment and cooperation of the three countries is conducive to promoting global growth, peace and stability," the statement stated.

The Jaishankar-Wang meet comes close on the heels of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meeting his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe on the side-

lines of the SCO defence ministers' meeting.

Both sides have kept both military and diplomatic communications open. While there have been five corps commander-level talks and another one likely in the near future, the special representatives of the two countries and foreign ministers have held telephonic conversations after June 15.

Meanwhile, Rajnath Singh, in an apparent barb at China, said the formal induction of Rafale jets by India is a stern message to the entire world, especially those targeting India's sovereignty.

Earlier in the day, Jaishankar had bilateral talks with the foreign ministers of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan before participating in the SCO foreign ministers' meeting. Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the meeting reviewed preparations for the upcoming SCO summit and also discussed various regional and global issues. | P9



Animal Husbandry Minister Prabhu Chaudhary tests positive

KARNATAKA COVID-19 BATTLE

Total active cases in state breach 1-lakh mark

9,217
Test Positive on Thursday

129
Today's Deaths
7,021
Fresh Discharges
• FULL COVERAGE P4

TOTAL CASES
4,30,947
6,937
Total Deaths
3,22,454
Total Discharges

Proposal to reopen schools draws mixed reaction from states

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 21. That is from when schools can be partially reopened, as per the Unlock 4.0 guidelines issued by the Centre. However, not all states are comfortable with the idea. Parents across the board are wary because of the pandemic though some senior students are upbeat.

While Delhi and Congress-ruled Punjab turned it down, southern states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Telangana appear to be sitting on the fence for now. According to TN school education minister K A Sengottaiyan, any decision on reopening shall be taken only after there is some relief from the pandemic.

Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, too, are yet to make up their minds. However, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand are gearing up to open schools for students of classes 9-12.

As for Kerala, it will take up the matter at a state cabinet meeting on September 16. According to experts, it is inevitable that schools will have to open soon. "Online mode cannot replace the traditional classroom teaching method completely. Hence students, especially in higher classes, can be allowed to get guidance from teachers on an individual basis at schools," said noted educationist R V G Menon.

Karnataka plans to announce its own guidelines shortly. According to S Suresh Kumar, minister for primary and secondary education, the state government has already taken steps for facilitating regular student-teacher interaction. "Not just of 9-10, children of all classes are engaged through Vidyagama," he said. Vidyagama is a programme under which teachers meet students in their neighbourhood to conduct activities and clear their doubts.

In Andhra Pradesh, the government is "mulling whether to ask teachers of all subjects to come every day in the regu-

lar school hours or whether to have specific days for specific subjects," said Principal Secretary (Education) B Rajasekhara. Neighbouring Telangana and Maharashtra are yet to take their call. "A decision will be made based on the situation," said R Rohini, District Education Officer of Hyderabad.

Odisha doesn't have plans to open schools anytime soon. All educational institutions in the state have been directed to remain closed till Durga Puja. Delhi, too, is wary. "Many parents requested us not open schools. I want to assure all of you that schools will remain closed till we are fully in control of the coronavirus," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had



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said last month. There is no change in his position.

According to Ashok Agarwal, president of the All India Parents Association, 80% of parents in Delhi are against school reopening.

Though Rajasthan has not yet offered any official reaction, most teachers, students and parents don't want schools to re-start from September 21. Assam is planning informal voluntary classes for students above Class V from the last week of this month. Haryana will start classes for students of classes 10-12 in two government schools on a trial basis, as most parents have given their consent, said a state government official.

(With inputs from our bureaux in Bengaluru, T'Puram, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Delhi, Lucknow, Raipur, Patna, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Ranchi, Bhopal and Mumbai)

COUNCIL CEASES

Gaurav Gupta named BBMP administrator

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

WITH the term of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council ending on Thursday, the State Government has appointed senior IAS officer Gaurav Gupta as administrator. This is the third time the BBMP has come under an administrator ever since it was formed in 2007. Gupta, a 1990 batch IAS officer, who is also Principal Secretary (Industries and Commerce), will hold concurrent charge for now.

Deputy CM Dr C N Ashwath Narayana reasoned that since the councillors' term has ended and fresh elections are some time away, the civic body will need an administrator, especially at a time when the city is experiencing rain havoc.

Additional Chief Secretary Rakesh Singh told *TNIE* that the process of conducting the council election is on, but due to the prevailing Covid-19 situation, it is difficult to do so. Also, a separate Act for the governance of Bengaluru is being planned and all these will require some time before elections can be held, he said.

In 2015, the present Chief Secretary T M Vijay Bhaskar had served as BBMP administrator before the council elections were held. The ward reservation was announced in April and election notification was issued in August that year. Results were declared on August 25, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were elected in September. Under Section 315 of Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, an administrator can be appointed in the absence of a full-fledged council.



PRAYING BEFORE PREYING

Priests from Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities perform 'Sarva Dharma Puja' during the induction ceremony of the Rafale jets, at the Indian Air Force base in Ambala, Haryana, on Thursday | P11 | REPORT: P9

K'TAKA PLANS TOUGHER ANTI-DRUG LAWS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE State Government is holding consultations with legal experts, including senior faculty of the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru, on giving more teeth to the laws against drug peddling.

"I have held discussions with legal experts on strengthening the anti-drug laws and will also discuss it with the Law Minister," Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai told reporters. The government will take the ongoing drive against drug peddling in the state to a logical end, he added.

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) police, who are investigating the case, "will not spare anyone involved in the drug trade, even if they are highly influential people," he said. While the CCB is probing the drug case, allegedly involving some members of the Kannada film fraternity, the state police have launched a massive drive against drug peddling over the last few days.



Police officials stack up the massive 1,350-kg haul of seized cannabis, at the Police Commissioner's Office in Bengaluru on Thursday | SERRANAH

Big bust: Cops seize 1.3 tons of ganja

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru/Kalaburagi

IN a major undercover operation, a team of Bengaluru's Seshadripuram police has unearthed a whopping 1.35 ton haul of ganja worth Rs 6 crore in Kalaburagi.

The police team, stringing two recent arrests and seizures of ganja in Bengaluru, got a lead about a massive operation under way in Kalaburagi. About 1.2 tons of ganja in 600 bags were hidden in a sump at a farmhouse in Kuridoddi locality of Lakshman Naik thanda in Kalaburagi town, Kalaburagi district. The sump was covered and horticulture crops grown over it. | P5

ED may look into money laundering angle

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE Sandalwood drug racket has caught the attention of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as some of the accused in the case are allegedly involved in money laundering. The ED officials, who met senior officers of the Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Thursday, are believed to have exchanged information about the case.

Sources said a team of ED officials arrived at the CCB office on Thursday morning and held discussions with senior officers regarding the drugs case. "As some of the accused, who have been arrested in the case, were arranging lavish parties across the country and sourced narcotics from abroad, huge money has changed hands," a source said. | P5

REVISED CENTRAL ADVISORY ON HOLDING EXAMS

Ahead of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test next week, the Centre on Thursday issued a revised SOP, which said that the discretion of whether or not to allow a Covid symptomatic candidate to write the test will lie with the examination authorities | P9

With/without
city/best
weekend/gate
30 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF INDULGE (TABLET)

